

HOW TO GET  
**WHAT  
YOU  
WANT**

---

**Without Having to Ask**

**RICHARD TEMPLAR**

The author of the international bestseller  
*The Rules of Work*

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# Introduction

It's easy to look at the world and think that the people who always seem to get what they want are just lucky. Actually luck has only a small part to play. Of course some people have a better start than others, but we all know people from comfortable, even cushy backgrounds who are miserable, and others who started out with nothing and have created a successful and happy life.

So what's the difference between those for whom things always seem to work out and those for whom it's always a struggle? Well, if you observe other people (as I do) you can see that some people know how to get what they want, and others don't. My wife, who is nothing if not focused,<sup>1</sup> comes from a decent background, but it's a long way from where she is now. Sometimes people tell her how lucky she is to have the lifestyle she has, with a job that fits perfectly around the kids, to which she replies (politely but firmly), "Lucky? Luck had nothing to do with it. I planned it this way."

It's true. She always knew she wanted to live in an old house in the country with cats and dogs and children and a job she could fit around them all. And I'll tell you something else. Before we ever

<sup>1</sup> Bit of a euphemism there, but I think I'll get away with that word.

met—eight years before our first child was born—she had the opportunity to become a free lancer. She knew she wanted kids in the future, and she thought, “This will be the job I need one day, when the chance for kids comes along,” so she took it. You can see why she resents being told she’s “lucky” to have a job she can work around the children.

There’s nothing special about my wife’s approach. Anyone can do it. You can do it. Forget about luck— if it decides to join you for a while that’s great, but you can do without it. It’s just a matter of being clear about what you want, and then knowing how to go about getting it. Which is what this book is all about.

There’s a common misunderstanding that getting what you want is the territory of the superconfident, those with chutzpah, bravado, oomph, front. I guess that’s because those kind of people are comfortable bossing others around and asking brazenly for what they want. But it’s not all about that at all. Of course, if you’re not as confident or assertive as you might be, you may not like asking for things. Sure, I can understand how you feel. You don’t want to put other people under pressure, or maybe you don’t want to be told no. Perhaps you’re just uncomfortable about baring your emotions to other people when it comes to discussing the things that really matter to you. It’s OK; we can work with that.

You see, if you play your cards right, there’s often no need to ask directly for what you want. A lot of the

skill is in the work you put in yourself in private—the thinking and planning. If you get that right, the job's half done already.

On top of that, you want people to see you as someone they'd like to help and support. If you present yourself as a positive, likeable person, why would anyone say no to you, without a really good reason? And if they do have a really good reason to say no—well, there are ways to deal with that, too. Ways of helping them to say yes.

If you're not used to getting what you want, stand by to change all that. It may take you a while to develop all these skills, but they're all achievable and you can start right away. So what are we waiting for? If this is what you want, let's do it.


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**PART 1**


**Be the Kind  
of Person  
Who Gets  
What They  
Want**





**L**ook around you. Can you see the haves and the have nots? Of course you can. Some people just seem to have everything fall into their lap, whereas others maybe try just as hard but don't get everything. We all have good breaks and bad breaks. So why do some people go on to get what they want so often, whereas others always seem to get the short end of the stick?

Well, it's a lot to do with you personally. If you get the foundations in place, you're much more likely to get what you want most of the time. So before we look later on at the techniques you can use, let's just start by considering how you can maximize your chances of getting anything you decide to go for.



# Know What You Want

**P**retty obvious really. But hang on; are you really sure you know just what it is you're trying to get? Promotion maybe? A pay raise? Are you desperate for somebody to offer you a new job in his company? Or do you want to persuade your partner to cut down her hours and spend more time with you? Start a family maybe?

Let's take just one of those as an example—say, getting promoted. OK; that's an aim. So what's your problem? If you work reasonably hard, the odds are you'll get just what you want, eventually. Most of us gradually work our way up the ladder. Oh, you don't

want it eventually, you want it now—is that right?  
Well, why didn't you say so?

And while we're at it, precisely what job do you want to be promoted to? And at what pay?

You see, the clearer you are about what *exactly* you want, the easier it is to aim for it. Otherwise you may not even know when you've got it. Take getting your partner to work less and spend more time with you as an example. If he comes home earlier one night a week, will you be happy? Will you have what you want? Maybe that will be fine. Or maybe you want him to come home at a reasonable time three days a week, or every day, or just one day but to also be up for going out for the evening.

Try asking yourself: “How will I know I've got what I want on this?” What will be different? What will have changed? How will your life look?

So the first step to getting what you want is to identify precisely what that want is.



Know Why  
You Want It

So let's go back to that promotion. What's that all about then? Is it that you want to be recognized by the company? Or to improve your career prospects when you move on? Or to make your folks proud? Or because you want the pay raise that goes with it? Or is it just that you don't want that colleague you can't stand to get it instead?

There's a reason for considering this. You see; it might turn out that what you *think* you want isn't actually what you want at all. Suppose you were offered a more impressive job title but without any pay raise or significant increase in responsibility. Would you have gotten what you want? That's going to depend, isn't it? If what you really wanted was recognition from your boss, it may well be the answer to your wishes. But if you wanted a promotion because you needed a higher salary, then it's not going to help. In fact a pay raise without a promotion would have been much closer to your goal.

Say you want a better relationship. Why is that? You might think that the answer to this question is obvious. And indeed you might be right. Sometimes it is obvious. But sometimes we don't realize exactly what we want until we've established why we want it. People who get what they want don't take the "why" for granted. They think it through.



Know How  
Much You  
Want It

**W**e want lots of things. Well, I know I do.<sup>2</sup> I expect you do, too. So it's important to know what you really, really want. Sometimes we have to play one thing off against another. That's hard to do unless you know where your priorities lie.

Those people who always seem to have what they want...actually they don't. They often sacrifice smaller wants in the interests of bigger ones. They pass up on the promotion they wanted because it would mean longer hours, and family time means more to them—that's the thing they really want. Where they were smart was in recognizing how much they wanted each thing, and prioritizing them.

How much do you want to start a family, for example? Enough to stay put rather than moving to a house in a more expensive area? Enough to give up vacations for the foreseeable future? Enough to put your career on hold for a few years?

No one can have everything. So work out how much you want the particular thing you're aiming at, especially in relation to all the other things you might want.

<sup>2</sup> Starting with a machine that can detect you thinking about coffee and make it before you've noticed you wanted it.

# Want What You Get

I have a friend who once went for an interview for a job. To be honest she was driven by desperation—she just needed to get away from the hellish career situation she was in (and fast). She didn't get the job and was absolutely devastated. However, having met my friend, the interviewer decided to bring forward plans to create a completely new role (as well as filling the existing vacancy) just so she could be hired.

She's still working in that job ten years later; it's been that good, and it has taken her in a whole new direction she would never have previously envisioned but one she came to feel was absolutely ideal for her.

I have another friend who met a woman he liked, as a friend, but initially discounted her as a future partner because she wasn't like his previous girlfriends, and there was no stomach churning or massive physical firework reaction. The woman is now his wife, they've started a family, and he considers himself to be the most amazingly lucky man to have such a fantastic relationship.

Sometimes you don't know what you want until it happens. You can't always predict what's going to come your way. But if you are open to possibility, and are willing to give things a try to see where it takes you, sometimes it will take you to a place you couldn't have envisioned but that is perfect for you. It might be that you get something that is not exactly what you originally envisioned as your goal, but you can decide to want it having already gotten it.

Only you will ever really know whether you get what you want. I'm not advocating settling for second best here. This is not about compromise; it's about attitude. If the point of the exercise—to find work you enjoy, to have a brilliant relationship—has been achieved, it's entirely a matter of perspective.